

2nd parole for man who burned son

WED MAY 8 1991

By Tribune staff and news services

SACRAMENTO — Charles Rothenberg, who was convicted of setting his young son on fire in 1983 but violated parole in Oakland last year, will be paroled again today, state corrections officials said yesterday.

Authorities refused to disclose specific details about when Rothenberg, 50, would be released from the remote state prison at Pelican Bay, and where he will live.

This is Rothenberg's second parole. He was returned to prison last October after he slipped away from a parole agent accompanying him to a job interview in Oakland. Correctional authorities said he intentionally violated his parole. He had been free less than nine months.

"He's going to be released from prison ... sometime on May 8," said state Corrections Department spokesman Mike Van Winkle. "That's all we can say about it."

Van Winkle said Rothenberg will be watched around the clock and be required to wear an electronic monitor that alerts parole authorities if he strays from where he's supposed to be.

Rothenberg was convicted of attempted murder, arson and other charges for pouring kerosene over his son, David, and setting the boy on fire in a motel room. The boy, then 6, was severely disfigured.

Van Winkle said conditions of Rothenberg's parole will be similar to last time.

He will be prohibited from entering Orange County or having any contact with his son and the boy's mother and stepfather without permission from parole agents, Van Winkle said.

Other conditions of his parole will require him to get permission to leave the county where he's placed, Van Winkle said.

Father who torched son is released on parole again

THU MAY 9 1991
The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO — A man who doused his son with kerosene and set him ablaze was freed yesterday from state prison, paroled for the 1983 attack that left the boy disfigured.

Charles Rothenberg, 50, was released during the afternoon, Corrections Department spokesman Mike Van Winkle said. He said department policy prevented him from providing details of the release.

"He has been paroled. But I can't say from which prison or to which county he has been sent," Van Winkle said. Rothenberg had served about seven years of a 13-year term.

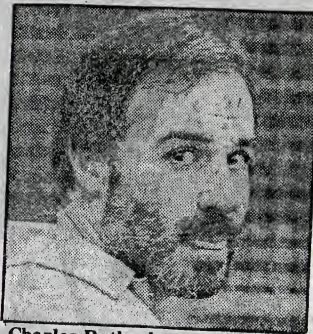
Rothenberg, who had been

freed once before but violated his parole and returned to custody, had been held at Pelican Bay State Prison, California's highest security-lockup about 25 miles south of the Oregon line.

Buena Park police Lt. Richard Hafdahl, stepfather of the victim, 13-year-old David Jordan Robinson, said the family wasn't particularly alarmed about the latest release of Rothenberg.

"It is much, much less traumatic than the first time," Hafdahl said. "Life is going to be the same as the first time. He's under a security net, and we have our own security system, which is confidential, in place."

Under the provisions of his parole, Rothenberg will be re-



Charles Rothenberg
Strict parole conditions

quired to wear an ankle transmitter that lets authorities know if he strays more than 100 yards

from his home, said Corrections Department spokesman Mike Van Winkle.

Rothenberg's residence also will be placed under physical surveillance by at least one parole agent, and at times agents will be inside the residence.

"This is about the most restrictive parole conditions, in terms of round-the-clock surveillance, that we've ever had," Van Winkle said.

He declined to identify where Rothenberg would live, but said that local law enforcement authorities are cooperating. The parole restrictions remain in effect until January 1993, Van Winkle said.

Rothenberg was convicted of

attempted murder, arson and other charges for pouring the flammable liquid on his son, then 6, and setting him on fire in a Buena Park motel room. He later said he meant to kill himself and David because his ex-wife,

Marie, wouldn't let him see their son anymore.

Instead, he fled as flames swept through the motel room, where the two had been staying in preparation for a trip to Disneyland.

LOS ANGELES

FRI MAR - 6 1992 Man who burned son briefly missing

Charles Rothenberg who set his son aflame in a hotel room during a holiday excursion to Disneyland, disappeared for four hours yesterday in the Los Angeles area before surrendering to state corrections authorities.

In a facsimile news release sent to The Associated Press, California Department of Corrections officials said Rothenberg escaped surveillance at 3:50 p.m.

"Rothenberg bolted and ran while being searched after shopping at a department store," the news release said. "Rothenberg says he feared being accused of shoplifting, panicked and fled the parole agent."

"Parole agents immediately instituted search procedures, notified local law enforcement and the victim and activated contingency plans to protect the victim."

Dad who set son afire is remorseful

JUN - 7 1994

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Charles Rothenberg has a new job and a new life.

He quietly goes to work each day, keeps to himself and returns home to a tidy apartment. He meets few people who connect him with one of the most notorious crimes in state history.

It was Rothenberg, now 53, who doused his 6-year-old son David with kerosene and set him on fire 11 years ago. After 6½ years in prison, Rothenberg was paroled and now says he's sorry and is determined to turn his life around.

"I pay my taxes. I go to work. I won't allow myself pleasure because I'm undeserving," Rothenberg told the San Francisco Chronicle in his first lengthy interview since his parole to Oakland in 1990. "But I'm trying my hardest to live a normal life and keep to myself."

In the midst of a custody battle with his then-wife, Marie, Rothen-

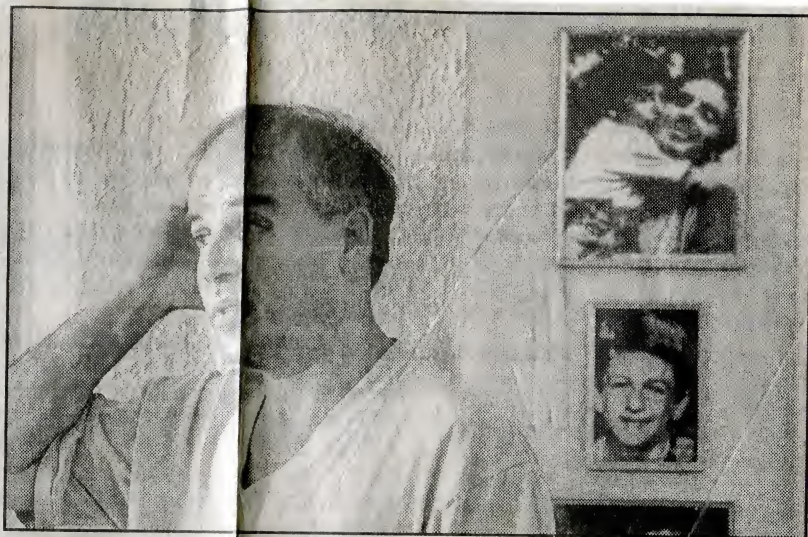
berg took David without permission from New York to Southern California. After a heated phone argument with his wife, Rothenberg gave David a sleeping pill and doused the hotel room with kerosene before setting it ablaze.

David's fear of his father and community outrage resulted in the most expensive parolee-supervision effort in state history, at a cost of more than \$500,000. His presence angered Oakland community leaders, who tried in vain to have Rothenberg paroled elsewhere, saying he was still dangerous.

But Rothenberg's parole went without incident, and ended quietly last September. He is free to go where he wishes, knowing that friends will be difficult to find.

"It's a very lonely life because, you know, who would want to know me?" he said.

David and his mother Marie Haf-dahl — she married the police officer who investigated the attack,



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Charles Rothenberg, who set his son on fire 11 years ago, recently completed parole and is living quietly in Oakland.

Thomas Hafdahl — swear they will never speak to Rothenberg again.

Rothenberg says he understands and realizes he has no place in his family's life.

"I would never, ever contact them if they don't want me to, and I know they will probably never want that," he said.

Meanwhile, is trying to atone for

his act. He helped write a book about his case, "A World Without Tears: The Case of Charles Rothenberg," and donated all the proceeds to the National Burn Victim Foundation, a New Jersey-based group.

"I would like to do some good in life somehow," he said, "but I understand if nobody wants to hear me."